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Education Advocates Launch an Interactive Data Tool and Toolkit to Help Students and Families Advocate for Public Higher Education Affordability

BOSTON (August 9, 2023) – As policymakers grapple with how to address higher education access and affordability in the wake of the Supreme Court's decision on affirmative action and federal student debt forgiveness, [The Massachusetts Education Partnership \(MEEP\)](#) released today a collection of resources for families, students and advocates to support equitable access to an affordable, high-quality postsecondary education at Massachusetts public colleges and universities. The resources include a data hub to explore affordability indicators at public two and four-year institutions in the Commonwealth and a toolkit that offers actionable steps that advocates can take to encourage conversations about debt-free higher education and drive meaningful policy changes. The toolkit is available in English and Spanish.

"A college degree can be a ticket to achieving social and economic mobility, not just for individual students, but entire families for generations, yet the cost of public higher education in our state has increased by 59% since 2000. As a result, one of the biggest concerns for students from low-income backgrounds, students of color, and first-generation college-goers is the rising cost of college and how to pay for it," said Genesis Carela, state policy associate for [The Education Trust in Massachusetts](#). "The time is now to level the playing field. We must all unite to support policies that provide adequate and equitable funding to public colleges so all students can compete in today's knowledge-based economy."

The toolkit and the data hub are a part of MEEP's ["All In For A Debt-Free Future"](#) campaign, a call for a statewide commitment to make Massachusetts public colleges and universities more affordable and accessible for systemically underserved students, especially for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds. This includes supporting the passage of policies to ensure every student has equitable access to affordable public higher education.

The resources – created in partnership with social justice, civil rights, and education advocates from across the Commonwealth – are accompanied by [videos](#) that center students' and families' perspectives, lived realities, and voices on the issue of public higher education affordability.

"Students, families, and community members deserve access to clear and transparent information about the cost of attaining a postsecondary degree or credential," said Amanda Seider, executive director of [OneGoal Massachusetts](#). "We're proud to partner with the Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership to offer a comprehensive resource that will put this critical information into their hands as they consider their postsecondary options. We're excited that the data and guidance in this tool will help students and families make informed decisions, advocate for resources, and push for solutions that will increase affordability for all."

The campaign is being launched at a pivotal moment as The Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) will be making critical decisions about how to use new annual funding from Question 1 — also known as the Fair Share Amendment — and new resources being allocated in the fiscal year 2024 budget.

For more information about "All In For A Debt-Free Future," to learn how to put the toolkit into action, and sign up to receive updates from The Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership, visit www.masseduequity.org/Allin4aDebtFreeFuture.

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About The Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership (MEEP)

The Massachusetts Education Equity Partnership (MEEP) is a collective effort of civil rights, social justice, and education advocates from across the Commonwealth working together to promote educational equity for historically underserved students in our state's schools. In 2022, in response to local and national conversations regarding access and affordability in public colleges and universities, MEEP partners launched a Higher Education working group to focus on centering equity in public postsecondary policies and programs. Learn more at www.masseduequity.org.